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State Senator

Burton Leland

Serving the People in the 5th District

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Dear Neighbors,

As we move forward to the November events on the local political scene, I believe we should stay in touch with what's happening at the state and federal levels. Michigan is weathering one of the more tumultuous economic times ever. Through the careful and thoughtful leadership of Gov. Granholm, we are improving our economic situation.

At this writing, my colleagues and I are awaiting a revenue estimating conference, which will determine how much money is available to the state for the fiscal year that begins October 1, 2005. After this is determined, we can move forward to a more accurate budget.

A number of programs that affect you or someone you know may be financially impacted. Keep in touch with me and other elected officials as we complete the budget for the fiscal year. We are in office to fight for you.

Sincerely,

Burton Leland
State Senator, 5th District



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Highway Funds Returned to Michigan

Congress finally increased funds to Michigan by way of a new federal highway and transit bill. Our state delegation fought for years to return more dollars to Michigan to support our transportation endeavors.

Instead of receiving 90.5 cents from Washington for every dollar we pay in

highway taxes, we will receive 92 cents. This totals nearly \$595 million for Michigan's transit programs between now and 2009.

Our members of Congress and Gov. Granholm lobbied hard to get increased funds returned to our state. Their success is expected to create 61,500 new jobs.

The bill also earmarks \$100 million for Michigan's Projects of Regional and National Significance, which are projects designated by lawmakers for special money and quick approval. Locally, that means the River Walk along the Detroit River, construction of the Marine Terminal, and possible construction of new gateways to Canada.

Detroit Metro Wins Grant

The U.S. Department of Transportation awarded \$2.9 million to Wayne County for the Detroit Metropolitan Wayne County Airport. The grant will be used to build a de-icing containment facility that will stop de-icing fluid, used during the winter months, from contaminating local waterways.

U.S. Senators Carl Levin and Debbie Stabenow jointly announced the grant. Both senators support the maintenance and growth of Detroit Metro, a major international center.

"This grant will help fund the necessary improvements to keep Detroit Metro running efficiently and in an environmentally sound

manner as it continues to serve as the major business and travel hub for the greater Detroit area," Sen. Levin said.

"Aircrafts need to be de-iced, but it is important that we prevent the de-icing compounds from causing environmental damage," said Sen. Stabenow.

Elder Abuse Prevention Moves Center Stage

Governor Jennifer M. Granholm recently created the Michigan Task Force on Elder Abuse. The task force will offer recommendations on ways to ensure that Michigan's senior citizens are protected from abuse, fraud, neglect, and financial exploitation.

"Each year, an estimated 80,000 Michigan citizens aged 60 or older are the victims of financial fraud and physical abuse," Gov. Granholm said. "This task force will help us develop a blueprint to ensure that our most vulnerable citizens are protected."

Task force members will review current state efforts to prevent and prosecute elder abuse,

identify and prioritize issues and challenges that must be addressed to prevent abuse, and provide recommendations to develop a plan to generate public awareness on the scope of elder abuse.

The task force will consist of 15 members who serve at the pleasure of the Governor and who represent key sectors of the community dedicated to protecting senior citizens. The directors of the Office of Services to the Aging, the Department of Community Health, the Department of Human Services, the Department of State Police, and the commissioner of the Office of Financial and Insurance Services will serve

as non-voting members of the task force.

I look forward to participating in the upcoming hearings on elder abuse. Seniors are a national treasure and should be treated with dignity and respect.



Proposed Budgets Cut State Growth

Lawmakers cut more than \$45 million from Detroit, Wayne County, and Wayne State University (WSU), in a proposed budget for FY 2005-2006. They've turned tough choices into callous decisions. For some, it's easy to interrupt or destroy someone's health care services, college education, or primary education process. They don't feel the pain and they seemingly escape the repercussions.

There is one truth of life: you reap what you sow. The root of Michigan's slow financial recovery is that too many of our policy decisions are driven by partisan or social ideology instead of what is best for every citizen of this state.

Southeastern Michigan, the working class, the elderly, and our children are hardest hit by the budget bills being passed by state lawmakers.

When one considers the state's largest city and county are located in southeastern Michigan, which is mostly populated by the working class who are steadily losing jobs, one can conclude that Michigan is making war against itself.

Here are examples of some of the proposed cuts:

Department of Community Health

- \$20 million in cuts to medical and mental health programs.
- 36,000 children, elderly, and vulnerable citizens will be removed from Medicaid.

- 43,000 caregiver relatives, people who take care of family members, and young people age 19-21 will lose their Medicaid coverage.
- Parents who cannot afford private health insurance for their children and have turned to MICHild will now have to pay premiums or lose health care for their children.
- Cuts to Healthy Michigan programs will abolish funding for the Alzheimer's Information Network and dental, hearing screening, child and adult arthritis, health disparities, infant mortality, migrant health and diabetes outreach services.

Higher Education

- Wayne State University will lose \$10.4 million, or 5%, of its state funding.
- Some universities in other parts of the state received increases upwards of 22%. The disparity is glaring and hopefully will be stopped by Governor Granholm.
- WSU officials will be forced to consider raising tuition rates to recover the funding loss. The domino effect will cause lower enrollment and a lesser investment in the community.
- WSU is unique and provides this state with diverse graduates—the very people we need to renew our economy's growth.

K-12 School Aid

- This budget cut \$15 million from DPS. These monies funded the appointed school board that will remain in power until January 2006. The district does not have money to cover these costs.
- The budget doesn't include increased funding for at-risk youth as recommended by Governor Granholm. Funding levels will remain static with a growing need.
- Legislators failed to adopt Governor Granholm's suggestion of a \$50 increase in per-pupil funding for high school students. Studies have shown that it costs more to educate high school students than other students in the education system.

Department of Corrections

- More than \$1.5 million was cut for Hepatitis C testing and treatment.
- Lawmakers have turned their backs on many women and children whose lives will be changed by insidious disease.
- Just last year, the legislature allocated \$1.2 million for new Hepatitis C testing and treatment for Michigan prisoners. Back-peddling will only worsen the problem.

I am working with my colleagues to defeat these attacks on our citizens and to pass a budget that protects our families and our priorities.



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Group Purchasing to Lower Urban Insurance Rates

Community and faith-based organizations in urban areas can create purchasing groups that negotiate directly with insurance companies on behalf of their members under a new initiative



introduced by Gov. Granholm and Insurance Commissioner Linda Watters.



Gov. Granholm and Commissioner Watters recently announced the new plan that would make home and auto insurance more affordable. Under the proposal, community groups, churches, and neighborhood organizations would team up to create groups of potential customers.

These customers are required to have good insurance claims history. The lower risk presented by group members should result in lower insurance rates, according to officials.

The Governor's Office of Community and Faith-based Initiatives will work with local clergy and groups to find people who fit the qualifications to form purchasing groups.



Michigan Projects Prime for Federal Funds

Several state projects are in line to receive federal monies. The U.S. Senate Appropriations Committee recently approved the spending bills for the Departments of Transportation, Treasury, Judiciary, and Housing and Urban Development.

For Metro Detroiters that means:

Detroit Metro Airport – a “letter of intent” to fund \$19.05 million for airport improvement projects.

Detroit City Airport – Land acquisition, runway replacement, and airport modernization.

Detroit West Riverfront Restoration \$5 million – Creation of a pedestrian walkway that will connect the greenways from the East Riverfront to the Southwest Riverfront.